



**H O C K E Y**

# **LEARN TO PLAY PROGRAM**

**ORIENTATION GUIDE**

**2025-2026 SEASON**



# NEWTON YOUTH HOCKEY

## LEARN TO PLAY PROGRAM ORIENTATION GUIDE

### Welcome to Newton Youth Hockey

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the membership, welcome to Newton Youth Hockey. Whether your child is new to skating and hockey or is returning for another season, we look forward to supporting your player in their development and ensuring that hockey is a fun and rewarding experience.

Newton Youth Hockey is a 501c3 non-profit organization and is a member of USA Hockey and Massachusetts Hockey in District 9. Our programs cover boys and girls from age five (Learn to Play) all the way through high school (Midgets). This season, our program has seventeen travel teams participating in the Valley Hockey League and the Middlesex Yankee Conference Girls Hockey League. However, the lifeblood of our program begins here, in Learn to Play, where many of our children have discovered and developed their love of the game, made lasting friendships, and learned valuable life lessons, all in the course of some fun 50 minute sessions on ice.

It is important to note that NYH is a volunteer-run organization. Whether you can help out on the ice, with team events, at the board level, or simply helping kids tie their skates, I encourage you to join in with the NYH community and support our kids in whatever way appeals to you most.

Throughout the rest of this document, you will find information that will answer many of the questions you may have as the season is about to begin. However, if there is anything that we have missed, please feel free to reach out to us at any time. We look forward to a great season, and are delighted that you and your family have chosen to join us.

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## Program Overview

The primary goal of the NYH Learn to Play program is to create an environment that engenders confidence and an interest in hockey. All of the drills are designed to generate as much fun as possible while teaching core hockey skills and techniques. NYH follows the American Development Model promoted by USA Hockey, which encourages small-area games and drills to maximize puck touches and player engagement. As a result, our sessions will generally include a number of stations, with players rotating through each activity every six to eight minutes.

We will begin the program with a concentration on skills development on both Saturdays and Sundays. In January, we will start to break off into teams on Saturdays. Each team will practice a drill for the first half of their session. For the remainder of the session, the teams will play games in a cross-ice setting. There will be no scores or records kept. The focus is to provide a setting to learn a game environment and, more importantly, to develop teamwork and camaraderie.



### Saturdays – John A. Ryan Arena, Watertown

Our Saturday program takes place at John A. Ryan Arena (the JAR) in Watertown at 10:15am. Saturdays will include a mix of station-based skills development and informal scrimmages.

Please note that parents should not enter the player benches on either side of the rink. These areas are used by our volunteers to stage their practice plans. There is plenty of seating available in the bleachers, as well as a warm room near the entrance which overlooks the ice. If you feel that your child needs to see your face while they are on the ice, please wave at them through the glass around the rink and then let them quickly return their attention to their coach.

### Sundays – Daly Rink, Newton

Sunday's session takes place at 8:00 at Daly Rink in Newton. This session is focused on skill development, with an emphasis on skating and puck control.

Please follow the signs in the lobby and get changed in the designated area. Bleachers are located all the way around the rink on the right side, or many parents choose to stand and watch at the glass or from the warm comfort of the lobby.

### Key Dates and Scheduling Notes

November 8 – first Learn to Play session

March 8 – final Learn to Play session

Learn to Play will take place during school breaks, but we will have a few breaks over the Thanksgiving and Winter holidays. There will be no Saturday sessions on Nov 29 or Dec 27, and no Sunday session on Dec 29.

In the event that we need to cancel any session due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances, we will send an email out to all registered families as soon as possible.



## Preparing Your Player

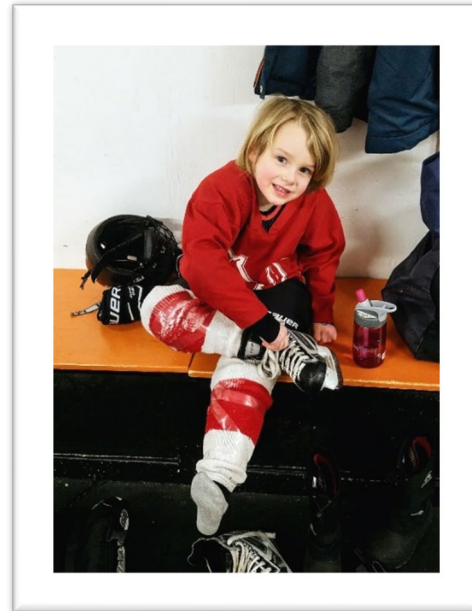
Getting your player onto the ice on time, fully equipped, and in the right frame of mind starts at home. Develop a habit of checking that everything is in their hockey bag and make sure that you leave with plenty of time to arrive at the rink with enough time to use the restroom and get their gear on.

Please note that you should not buy gear that your child can “grow into.”

### Equipment

Below is the typical order of putting on equipment.

1. Sports Guard (jock or jill) – these generally have Velcro attachment points for hockey socks
2. Shin Guards
3. Hockey Socks – wrap them in hockey tape to keep socks in place, particularly if they don't have attachment points on their base layer
4. Hockey Pants
5. Skates (tie them tightly!)
6. Shoulder Pads
7. Elbow Pads
8. Jersey (you'll receive this on day one!)
9. Neck Protector (some base layer shirts have this built in)
10. Hockey Helmet
11. Gloves
12. Stick



## Other Equipment Notes

Skate manufacturers recommend sharpening skates every eight hours of use. As long as your child is mindful of not walking on cement floors and doesn't have visible nicks in their blades, you can likely go for longer than that at this level of play. Sharpening is available at Daly Rink and at pretty much anywhere you can buy skates.

Sticks should be cut to an appropriate length for your child. With skates on, the stick should come roughly to their chin/nose. Learning with a stick that is too big for them will make it hard for them to handle the puck.

Keep a roll of hockey tape in your equipment bag. In addition to taping socks, it will also serve you well if and when Velcro on elbow pads or other equipment loses its effectiveness.

## Additional Resources

USA Hockey has compiled a number of resources for new hockey parents. For additional information, please visit <https://www.usahockey.com/newparents>.



## Parent Expectations

Being actively involved and supporting your child's interest in hockey is a great start to supporting their growth and development. Below are some tips for parents, some of which are particular to our program and some of which are broader in scope. All of them are intended to help promote a healthy, positive experience for your child.

1. Be positive – about your child and others. Negative talk about other skaters, volunteers, or parents creates an atmosphere not conducive to learning and makes it less fun for everyone involved. If you have genuine feedback or need to speak about a particular incident, please reach out to us directly instead.
2. Encourage your child to pay attention. Coaching a group of children at this age is challenging enough. Please do your best to instill a respect for the coaches and the structure of the practice. There are definitely times to have fun on the ice, but while the coach is explaining a drill is not one of them.
3. On a similar note, please do not bang on the glass or try to communicate with your child during practice. This is disruptive to players, volunteers, and other parents.
4. You are expected to stay in the building while your child is on the ice. This is not a drop-off activity. Young children may get upset during the practice or need to go to the bathroom, and it's helpful if you're there for them when needed.
5. We understand that sometimes we all get to the rink later than planned. Although we appreciate the skaters being ready to go on time, please don't worry if you're a little late. Make sure you take the time to get your child's equipment on properly and send them onto the ice when they're ready. With the groups rotating through stations every 6-8 minutes, they'll quickly be put into a group and will join in without missing a beat.
6. We also understand that NYH is just one component of your family schedule. While we encourage players to attend as many sessions as they can, please don't feel guilty about missing events due to other obligations. Players across all of our age groups have other interests and routinely miss occasional practices and games – remember, this is supposed to be fun, not work!
7. Finally, talk to the other parents! If you need help getting your player dressed or skates tied, ask for help. You've sent your children out there to learn a new sport and make new friends – lead by example and try to do the same thing!



## On-Ice Volunteer Expectations

The purpose of the Learn to Play program is to develop skills and generate a passion for hockey in a positive, encouraging, and safe atmosphere. NYH's priority is to provide an enjoyable experience for the participants each and every practice.

Please arrive 10-15 minutes early on Saturday mornings to review the practice plan, set-up, and begin the warm-ups for the day. The kids can be on the ice AS LONG AS A COACH IS ON THE ICE. It is best for the kids to be warming up for the first 5-7 minutes on the ice in a coordinated fashion. This allows for late families to show up and lace up without feeling rushed.

Each parent will be present to coach at one of the stations assigned to them. **YOU CANNOT LEAVE THE STATION TO FOLLOW YOUR CHILD AROUND THE PRACTICE!** The players will develop confidence and independence by processing different coaching methods.

On Sunday mornings, our external coaching consultant will set up the stations and run group drills for the first part of the practice. It is best for the on-ice volunteers to stand next to the rows of children to keep them focused and provide an enjoyable experience with encouragement and motivation.

Note that helmets are required for all on-ice volunteers. Please show up ready to participate.





## USA Hockey Codes of Conduct

USA Hockey developed codes of conduct for coaches, parents, players, and spectators to help everyone understand the expectations associated with their role in the game. We have included those relevant to players and their families in this guide for your reference.

### Player's Code of Conduct

1. Play for FUN.
2. Work hard to improve your skills.
3. Be a team player – get along with your teammates.
4. Learn teamwork, sportsmanship and discipline.
5. Learn the rules and play by them. Always be a good sport.
6. Respect your coach, your teammates, your parents, opponents, and officials.
7. Be on time.
8. Never argue with an official's decision.

### Parent's Code of Conduct

1. Don't force your children to participate in sports, but support their desires to play their chosen sports for their enjoyment. Children are involved in organized sports for their enjoyment. Make it fun.
2. Encourage your child to play by the rules. Remember, children learn best by example, so applaud the good plays of both teams.
3. Do not embarrass your child by yelling at players, coaches, or officials. By showing a positive attitude toward the game and all of its participants, your child will benefit.
4. Emphasize skill development and practices and how they benefit your young athlete. De-emphasize games and competition in the lower age groups.
5. Know and study the rules of the game and support the officials on and off the ice. This approach will help in the development and support of the game. Any criticism of the officials only hurts the game.
6. Applaud a good effort in both victory and defeat, and enforce the positive points of the game. Never yell or physically abuse your child after a game or practice – it is destructive. Work toward removing physical and verbal abuse in youth sports.
7. Recognize the importance of volunteer coaches. They are important to the development of your child and the sport. Communicate them and support them.
8. If you enjoy the game, learn all you can about hockey – and volunteer.

## Spectator's Code of Conduct

1. Display good sportsmanship. Always respect players, coaches, and officials.
2. Act appropriately; do not taunt or disturb other fans; enjoy the game together.
3. Cheer good plays of all participants; avoid booing opponents.
4. Cheer in a positive manner and encourage fair play; profanity and objectionable cheers or gestures are offensive.
5. Help provide a safe and fun environment.



## USA Hockey SafeSport Program

The safety of players is a top priority, which includes both on-ice and off-ice safety. USA Hockey works with leading organizations, including USOC, to develop policies and programs that protect our participants and create an environment safe from misconduct.

### On the ice...

USA Hockey has a strict standard of rules enforcement, allowing for improved skill development and a positive environment for all participants. This standard results in an emphasis on skating, puck possession and the proper use of body contact. This standard is diligently reviewed and also includes equipment policies.

USA Hockey has long been a leader in the effort to enhance player safety, spearheading numerous initiatives aimed at providing the safest possible environment. Those initiatives include the Heads-Up, Don't Duck campaign, which educates participants on techniques for reducing neck and spinal injuries, and an extensive concussion education program developed in partnership with leading doctors and medical experts.

### Off the ice...

USA Hockey has zero tolerance for misconduct and abuse. Our off-ice efforts are included within the SafeSport Program, which includes strict policies aimed at protecting participants from all types of misconduct. The SafeSport Program also includes a streamlined and neutral process for reporting alleged inappropriate behavior.

### About SafeSport:

SafeSport includes policies prohibiting sexual, physical and emotional abuse, hazing, bullying and threats. These policies also specifically address areas such as locker rooms, online and social media, team travel and host families.

SafeSport also encompasses education and awareness training, a screening and background check program, reporting-of-concerns protocol, responses to abuse and other misconduct, and continued monitoring of the SafeSport Program.

All coaches, officials (age 18 and over), and other employees and volunteers who have regular, routine or frequent access to or supervision over minor participants are required to complete SafeSport training and a background screen before their participation.

A USA Hockey member or parent of any member who violates any of the SafeSport policies may be denied eligibility within any USA Hockey program and is subject to appropriate disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension, permanent suspension, and/or referral to law enforcement authorities.